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The preceding quotations are from an article printed below, which was written by Mr. Deems Taylor, music critic of the New York World, and which originally appeared in a recent Sunday edition of that paper

The Wonder of the DUO-ART Reproducing Piano

IT was in 1909, writing in 'Tono-Bungay,' that H. G. Wells made what was probably the first mention in literature of the mechanical piano-player, or, as it was then called, the pianola. He called it 'a musical gorilla, with fingers all of one length. And a sort of soul.' But that was twelve years ago, and the musical gorilla has climbed the Darwinian ladder so high that he can fairly claim to belong to the order of 'homo sapiens.' Ignaz Friedman's recital at Aeolian Hall the other night brought home rather forcibly the tremendous strides the player-piano has made as an instrument of genuine artistic potentialities. Two of the numbers on his program, Liszt's 'Les Preludes' and his own suite, were works that called for two pianists. In each case Mr. Friedman at the first piano was accompanied by himself at the second, through the medium of a player-piano.

"I would shut my eyes and try to tell the real Friedman from the imitation"

"Frankly, I have always been prejudiced against mechanical pianos, accepting the 'Tono-Bungay' characterization of them as being still fundamentally true. Granting that they could play notes faster and more accurately than any human fingers, I would never have dreamed of taking them seriously as instruments for the production of real music. The Friedman recital, therefore, seemed a good opportunity to compare the living pianist with his mechanical replica and so settle forever the fate of the latter. So when Friedman and the reproducing instrument began to play his suite for two pianos I proceeded

to put the performance to the much-advertised test proposed by the manufacturers: I would shut my eyes and try to tell the real Friedman from the imitation. The pianist himself began; that much I made sure of before settling back to what an uncharitable neighbor scornfully mistook for slumber. After two or three minutes I began to wonder when the reproducing piano was going to start. I opened one eye, to discover that the keys of the reproducing piano were moving. It had been playing for some time.

"Disconcerting, this, but hardly conclusive. I shut the eye and prepared for further investigation and research. I would wait for some passage—it was sure to come—that would betray the essentially mechanical nature of the synthetic pianist. For some time the two instruments were plainly sounding together, but at last came the moment for which I had waited—a series of rapid solo scale passages played in the smooth, colorless, effortless style that only a mechanical instrument could achieve. So I looked. It was Friedman.

*The very touch and tone
of its human instigator*

"This was too much. Music critics are notoriously opinionated and irascible, and here was a mechanical device threatening to disprove several of my most treasured theories. It was obviously absurd to claim that a mechanical piano could reproduce Friedman's playing so perfectly that no one could tell the difference, and I was there to prove it. So once more I closed my eyes, prepared for the ultimate, conclusive trial. Some-

where the pianist or the player instrument would render a passage in a style so utterly characteristic as to be unmistakable; there remained only to wait for it. I waited. Minutes passed. Two or three times I said, 'that must be Friedman'; 'that must be the reproducing piano.' But I wasn't absolutely sure. Finally it came; a series of bass chords, played with the tremendous power and sonority that only human fingers can produce; the sort of tone in which the hearer can almost detect the impact of the hammers against the strings. No mechanical device in the world could play the piano like that. 'That's Friedman!' I announced triumphantly to my incredulous neighbor. Then I looked. There sat Friedman with his hands in his lap, gazing idly out into the audience—counting up the house, for all I knew—while that confounded reproducing piano thundered away by itself with the very touch and tone of its human instigator.

*The reproducing piano
must be taken seriously*

"This much is certain: that the reproducing-piano must be taken seriously. It is possible to buy a mechanical device that will reproduce the touch, style and interpretation of any concert pianist with uncanny fidelity. The reproducing-piano is bound to exert a tremendous influence upon the musical taste of the American people during the next generation; an influence which, if intelligently directed, cannot fail to raise the level of that taste. Even an Alaskan, nowadays, can hear the masterpieces of piano literature played by great artists."

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